



Janet Fitch

## Brooches are back

Azza Fahmy's career path is a fascinating and inspiring story, spanning almost 50 years in which she has become one of the most esteemed jewellery designers in the Middle East and is listed as one of Egypt's most influential women. Now this leading luxury jewellery house has made the journey from Egypt to London, with the opening in March of a store in the historic Burlington Arcade.

Fahmy initiated her path to success in jewellery in 1969, when, with a BA in Interior Design, she came across a book about the classical jewellery of Mediaeval Europe, and continuing her day job, spent her evenings learning with one of the craft's respected masters in Egypt's ancient jewellery quarter. In the early 1970s, she was awarded a scholarship by the British Council to study jewellery craft at the City of London Polytechnic, returning to Cairo with the confidence and skills to open her own shop there in 1981.

2002 saw the opening of her factory and design studio, now with over 200 employees. Fahmy herself began a serious exploration of traditional jewellery across Egypt, culminating in her first book, 'Enchanted Jewellery of Egypt', in 2003. "We are blessed with over 7000 years of heritage and culture," she says, "that has influenced global lifestyle such as art deco and jewellery. Egypt is where many of the modern popular designs originated like the serpent motif."



Amanda Denison



Melanie Georgacopoulos



Ella Fearon-Low

Setting her sights on Europe, Fahmy collaborated with Julien MacDonald at London Fashion Week 2006, and created a collection for the Hajji:Journey to the Heart of Islam exhibition at the British Museum in 2012. A year later a partnership with the Florence based Alchimia Contemporary Jewellery School resulted in the establishment of the Design Studio by Azza Fahmy, located in Old Cairo, to educate student designers to become professionals able to compete internationally. In 2016, she was appointed a board member of the Dubai Design and Fashion Council, in a mentor and incubator role, and she continues to travel widely, with boutiques in Cairo and Jordan, and retailing in Qatar, UAE, KSA, Washington DC and the UK.

Fahmy's enthusiasm and dedication has resulted in her two talented daughters' involvement in the business – Fatma Ghaly, the elder is managing director, and Amina Ghali is head of design, working "to evolve the brand, deliver relevant collections without losing our DNA and careful management of the expansion of our retail markets". "The London concept store is warm and intimate, with a neutral, gold and Tutankhamen blue colour palette to subtly convey our heritage in a contemporary way." The latest collection – Falahy Culture Collection - pays tribute to Egyptian peasant jewellery, capturing the skills of intricate fine wire work and highlighting desert

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A pear-shaped cabochon pink tourmaline, diamond, and 18 carat gold nugget flake necklace with melted piercings, by John Donald, 1998. Mahnaz Collection.

**“Mahnaz Collection, New York, is an outstanding jewellery gallery that collects, curates and sells original, fine, vintage, and artist-made jewellery from the mid-20th Century, and presents regular exhibitions”**



Joanna Sterling



The Pommier



Henn of London

and oasis stories with bangles, rings, earrings and necklaces in the brand's trademark combination of 18ct gold and sterling silver, with semi-precious stones, rose cut diamonds and pearls, coins, textured finishes, calligraphy and motifs. ([www.azzafahmy.com](http://www.azzafahmy.com))

Brooches are back, appearing on catwalks, in many designers' new collections, on the high street, and what's more, they are selling. The Pommier, an omni-channel global marketplace promotes the work of established and emerging designers, like the delicate 14ct yellow gold brooches by New York based Kozminka.

Wolf & Moon's colourful geometric designs lend themselves to brooches, like the Lotus brooch, or the Wildflower brooch in gold mirror and their trademark laser-cut acrylic mounted on a birch wood base. ([www.wolfandmoon.com](http://www.wolfandmoon.com)).

Gaelle Khouri's debut collection, Garden of Earthly Delights includes a stunning Spider brooch in 18ct yellow gold and blackened sterling silver, set with pink sapphires and amethyst. ([www.gaellekhouri.com](http://www.gaellekhouri.com))

Melanie Georgacopoulos has spent much of her career in jewellery working with pearls and mother-of-pearl, challenging ideas about classic pearl jewellery and exploring ideas around the universal fascination with rare and large gemstones, particularly diamonds. Her latest collections

include stunning brooches - Brilliant, Cushion and Marquise - made with pink, golden, lavender, peacock or white mother-of-pearl 'gemstones' that mimic popular diamond cuts, the largest matching the size of the Cullinan diamond. The MOP gemstones are held in 18ct yellow gold bezels to be worn centrally like chainless pendants. ([www.melaniegeorgacopoulos.com](http://www.melaniegeorgacopoulos.com))

Londoner Amanda Denison is influenced by the urban environment, working with precious and non-precious metals - steel and wet-process enamel to create her highly individual textured, subtly coloured magnetic brooches or brooches with a traditional two-pin attachment. They are in the Collective Invites exhibition at 67 York Street, London from 23-28 April, featuring work from eight alumni of the Crafts Council Hothouse programme, including Amanda and jeweller Rebecca Sarah Black. ([www.amandadenison.com](http://www.amandadenison.com)) ([www.67yorkstreet.com](http://www.67yorkstreet.com))

Jewellery is Ella Fearon-Low's second career, but after training and launching her business in 2016 she is already gaining accolades, exhibiting in the Scottish Gallery, in New Ashgate Gallery's Rising Stars, and winning a Bronze Award with her Cloud brooch with Golden Drop in this year's recent Goldsmiths' Craft and Design Council Awards. Her collections, Modern Rococo and Cumulus are in diverse materials - 22ct gold plated silver and brass, oxidised

silver, Lucite and vintage pearls. ([www.ellafearonlow.co.uk](http://www.ellafearonlow.co.uk))

Ella's Three Queens brooch has just been added to the collection of over 800 brooches belonging to Joanna Sterling, who also 'collects' short stories, especially flash fiction, and organises an annual competition (closing date 31 May 2018) featuring stories and brooches on her delightfully quirky website, The Casket of Delights. The collection - Sterling herself wears at least one brooch every day - comprises every style from antique to a pink plastic poodle brooch from Australia, and many from contemporary designers. ([www.thecasket.co.uk](http://www.thecasket.co.uk))

Hidden Treasures, from 6 April - 3 May, is the latest exhibition at Goldsmiths' Centre, showcasing exquisite jewellery, silverware and objet d'art from 22 eminent Fellows of the Institute of Professional Goldsmiths. ([www.goldsmiths-centre.org](http://www.goldsmiths-centre.org))

Mahnaz Collection, New York, is an outstanding jewellery gallery that collects, curates and sells original, fine, vintage, and artist-made jewellery from the mid-20th Century, and presents regular exhibitions. London Originals: The Jeweller's Art in Radical Times, from 11 April-11 May, features 150 pieces of jewellery from the 1960s and 1970s, when innovation and new ideas from designers like Andrew Grima and Barbara Cartlidge transformed the London jewellery scene. ([www.mahnazcollection.com](http://www.mahnazcollection.com)) JF

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